

* *On Decision of
Character.*

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a taper, exasperates a powerful fire (if there be fuel enough) to an indefinite intensity. It would be found, in fact, on a recollection of instances, that many of the persons most conspicuous for decision, have been exercised and forced to this high tone of spirit in having to make their way through opposition and contest; a discipline under which they were wrought to both a prompt acuteness of faculty, and an inflexibility of temper, hardly attainable even by minds of great natural strength, if brought forward into the affairs of life under indulgent auspices, and in habits of easy and friendly coincidence with those around him. Often, however, it is granted, the firmness matured by such discipline is, in a man of virtue, accompanied with a Catonic severity, and in a mere man of the world is an unhumanized repulsive hardness.

Desertion may be another cause conducive to the consolidation of this character. A kind mutually reclining dependence, is certainly for the happiness of human beings; but this necessarily prevents the development of some great individual powers which would be forced into action by a state of abandonment. I lately happened to notice, with some surprise, an ivy, which, finding nothing to cling to beyond a certain point had shot off into a bold elastic stem, with an air of as much independence as any branch of oak in the vicinity. So a human being thrown, whether by cruelty, justice, or accident, from all social support and kindness, if he have any vigour of spirit, and be not in the bodily debility of either childhood or age, will begin to act for himself with a resolution which will appear like a new faculty. And the most absolute inflexibility is likely to characterize the resolution of an individual who is obliged to deliberate without consultation, and execute without assistance. He will disdain to yield to beings who have rejected him, or to forego a particle of his designs or advantages in concession to the opinions or the will of all the world. Himself, his pursuits, and his interests, are emphatically his own. "The world is not his friend, nor the world's law;" * and therefore he becomes regardless of everything but its power, of which his policy carefully takes the measure, in order to ascertain his own means of

* See Shakspere's «⁴ Romeo and Juliet," Act V.,

Scene, i.